

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND
REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 92 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 1) making supplemental appropriations for job preservation and creation, infrastructure investment, energy efficiency and science, assistance to the unemployed, and State and local fiscal stabilization, for fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes, with Mr. TIERNEY in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose on Tuesday, January 27, 2009, all time for general debate pursuant to House Resolution 88 had expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 92, further general debate shall be confined to the bill and amendments specified in that resolution and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations.

The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York for a unanimous consent request.

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman for yielding and for his leadership on this tremendously important bill, and I place in the RECORD my statement in strong support of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Mr. Chair, the current economic crisis requires bold solutions that address the enormity of our economic woes, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan will do just that.

The \$825 billion recovery package that we are voting on will create or save an estimated 4 million jobs and will make key investments in our future.

But first and foremost, the economic recovery package focuses on blunting the effects of the recession and helping families in need.

In addition to increasing food stamp benefits and expanding unemployment benefits, our plan protects health care coverage for roughly 20 million Americans during this recession by increasing the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage (FMAP) so that no state has to cut eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP, the children's health insurance program, because of budget shortfalls.

For my home state of New York it more than doubles the FMAP match resulting in roughly \$10.42 billion over 9 quarters. This is critical funding for our state which is seeing an increase in caseloads as a result of the recession.

The recovery plan also invests in important needs that have been neglected over the past eight years. America's school, roads, bridges, and water systems are in disrepair and this is creating a drag on economic growth.

Our plan will spread job creation out over the next two years, which will soften the downturn and foster a solid economic recovery.

We have an historic opportunity to make the investments necessary to modernize our public infrastructure, transition to a clean energy economy, and make us more competitive in the 21st century.

It's time to get our economy back on track. I urge my colleagues to support the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, this economy is in crisis. The financial system of the country is in crisis. Retirement plans of millions of Americans have been destroyed. Families are angered and terrified. They see layoffs happening all around them. They and their friends are not only losing their jobs, they are losing health coverage. They are losing their ability to help their kids pay for college education.

President Bush, when he saw the initial stages of the problem, got Congress to give him \$750 billion to try to calm the chaos on Wall Street.

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President Obama is now looking for action to help Main Street. This package is designed to create jobs through construction and through changing the way we do business in the field of energy. It attempts to try to help victims of the recession by providing unemployment insurance, by increasing their ability to get Medicaid coverage if they lose their health care coverage and by increasing their ability to be able to afford COBRA payments if they lose their health insurance. This proposal is also aimed at rebuilding the economy, especially by changing the way this economy works in the energy area, in the science area and in the technology area. And I think we need to be about getting that done.

This bill is hugely expensive. But it is not nearly so costly as continuing business as usual. It has a big price tag because we are dealing with a big problem.

Unfortunately, the debate has been incredibly trivialized. Last night, for instance, we heard speaker after speaker discuss the need to act. But then they would say, "Well, I can't vote for this package because it contains money for the arts or money for the Mall." I would like to put those two items in perspective.

The arts funding in this bill is a tiny fraction of this entire bill. The arts expenditure in this bill represents about 6 cents out of every \$1,000 contained in this legislation. People ask, well, what does funding for the arts have to do with jobs? It is very simple. People in the arts field are losing their jobs just like anybody else. You have local arts agencies, you have local orchestras, local symphonies and local arts groups of all kinds who are shutting down, laying people off, and in a number of instances going bankrupt. This is a small, tiny effort to keep some of those people employed over the next 2 years. I make no apology for it. We have an obligation to salvage as many jobs as we can regardless of the fields in which people work.

The second issue is the Mall. People say, "Well, goodness gracious, what on Earth does spending for the Mall have to do with creating jobs?" Well, Mr. Chairman, I would point out that, again, the funding for the Mall represents about 25 cents of every \$1,000 in this bill, a tiny, tiny fraction. Three-quarters of that amount was directed at trying to preserve the Jefferson Memorial which is slowly sinking into the Tidal Basin and needs to be salvaged. But because these items have become such distractions, we've decided to take several items out. So the Mall is gone. We don't have to worry about refurbishing the Mall any more. That will have to wait for another time.

My point in discussing these two items is to simply express my regret at the way this debate has been trivialized. But I also think that it is revealing because I think it tells us what is really going on. And in my view, what is going on is this. At least one of the leaders in the Republican Caucus advised his caucus members that the way for the Republican minority to behave was to behave "like a thousand mosquitoes" to harass the majority. That may suit somebody's legislative style. It would not suit mine.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. OBEY. I yield myself 3 additional minutes.

But I think that comment is revelatory because that, for all practical purposes, is what we saw last night, many Members behaving like mosquitoes, focusing on trivia and ignoring the big picture. Some people will say, "Oh, you're moving too fast." I would point out, this work should have been done 3 and 4 months ago. Some of us tried in September to pass a very small economic recovery package. The then-Bush White House would have no part of it. They were not interested. So we've had to wait until now. But it is now essential for us to move. We've got to get this job on the road. Every week that we delay is another 100,000 or more people unemployed. I don't think we want that on any of our consciences.

This package is aimed at creating jobs. It's aimed at helping people who